

7th April 2010

Smt. Banashri Bose Harrison
Minister (Commerce)
Embassy of India,
2536 Massachusetts Ave
N.W. Washington D.C.
U.S.

Respected Madam

Sub : US Department of Labour's publication of goods allegedly produced by using child labour /
forced child labour including stones from India and our objections and protest.

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We respectfully submit to the US Department of Labour conveying our strong objections and protest affirming that there is no child labour or forced labour in the Indian Stone Industry in both the sectors of stone mining and the stone manufacturing factories.

We have already submitted on 10th December 2009 our objection and protest submitted through CAPEXIL, the Export Promotion Council for promoting the export of the natural stones and the same may be taken as part and parcel of this submission.

- 1.1. The Natural Stone Industry of India consist of Granites, Marble, Sandstone, Limestone, Quartzite, Slates. In this sector the stones rustically produced for aggregates to the construction of rural buildings, roads, dams, etc., is one category with which we do not deal with and we are not concerned with the same as none of our members handle these products nor export them to any country.
- 1.2. Further the rustic production of fence stones, sized stones for rustic constructions and for using agriculture and other domestic purposes in the villages etc. are also not the products handled for exports and hence our members are not connected therewith.
- 1.3. We are connected and focused to the dimensional stone mining of the variety of stones stated in para.1.1 and manufacturing and processing them in the factories with which our sector specializes and are engaged in exports.
- 1.4. For the mining of the stones particularly for Granite and Marble the Indian entrepreneurs are employing the latest technology and equipments like Front Endloaders, Dumpers, Pneumatic and Hydraulic Drilling Machines, Diamond Wiresaws, Derricks, Excavators, Heavy Mobile Cranes, etc. with skilled and experienced workmen.
- 1.5. The workmen are fully trained to handle such modern expensive imported and domestically procured machines and equipments. As per the Indian Mines Safety Regulations suitable engineers, foreman and mines mate are employed. These people are well educated and trained

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- 1.6. Unlike regular mining of lumps and bulk handling, the mining of dimensional stones are quite different as we are guided by the colour, design, pattern in uniform quality without any natural flaws and defects. There are about a dozen defects and flaws which we have to be carefully eliminated while mining and quality checking.
- 1.7. With this careful choosing of the right suitable materials, the recovery in this mining ranges between 5% - 10% and rarely sometimes 15%. For these defect removals and specialised mining operations, it is impossible to employ any inexperienced child like workers.
- 1.8. The machines required are running to several million rupees and for their operations we are using qualified and educated fitters, foremen and engineers with engineering, polytechnic, ITI educated and upgraded through vocational training imparting the necessary technological skill and expertise.
- 1.9. We do not employ anybody under the age of 18 in mining or processing in factories and rather to put it positively we are employing always above the age of 18, as then only they have the necessary physical endurance and mental abilities to handle these rugged skilled operations.
- 2.0. All the mines have the Mining Regulation Rules of the Government of India, and the State Governments and there are monitoring officers who periodically visit and check the mines. In every mine operation the Government of India have fixed the minimum wages for different category of operators and workmen. It is very strictly enforced and the violations if any are seriously punished.
- 2.1. Similarly the social compliance of providing safety equipments, rest rooms, providing potable drinking water and other safety equipments etc., are also being strictly followed and implemented in Stone Mining.
- 2.2. CAPEXIL, the Export Promotion Council promoting many Indian Products for export including the Granite, Marble and other Natural Stones conduct regular visits through their regional offices and ensures the legal and social compliance of the Central and State laws.
- 2.3. Further under the environmental and safety regulations suitable focus is given for reducing the noise as well as water pollution and smoke, etc.
- 2.4. With the large young working class availability with appropriate qualification, India is one of the very advanced country in employing experienced adult workers and as well as using the largest imported and indigenous earth moving and mining equipments.
- 2.5. All the international earthmoving machines in popular brands like Caterpillar, Komatsu, Hitachi, Samsung and other popular brands are used in Indian Stone Industry.
- 2.6. Stone processing and manufacturing factories in this sector normally produce building slabs, cut-to-size, counter tops, memorials, monuments, mausoleums, markers and calibrated tiles and art works.

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- 2.7. In this specialized factories we use heavy Gantry Cranes, EOT Cranes, Mobile Cranes, Forklifts, Gangsaws, Diamond Block Cutters, Polishing Machines, Multiple Headed Polishing Line, Tile Making Lines, Edge Cutting Machines, Profiling Machines, Flame Finished Machines, Water Jet Machines, Hand Polishing Machines and Hand Tool operated engraving and sculpturing works. Most of these machines are imported from Italy, USA, Japan, China, France, Germany etc. In these type of factories no child is employed nor a child can handle any of these equipments. Qualified engineers, mechanics, operators, artists and experienced workmen are employed.
- 2.8. Infact foreign experts who come for erection and commissioning of equipments as well as indigenous experts fully train the Indian work force enabling them to operate and run the machines with optimum productivity with international quality standards.
- 2.9. There are many labour regulations and notifications which are physically exhibited for the benefit of the workmen. Many foreign companies and experts have visited the factories as well as quarries / mines and have appreciated all the modern methodology and the scientific technology and the safety standards followed in the Indian Stone Industry.
- 3.0. Many of the Indian Stone Buyers from abroad have taken several photographs with the workers appreciating their capabilities. In the factories also the minimum wages fixed by the government are complied with.
- 3.1. In the Indian Stone Industry the workers are getting many benefits like minimum wages , monthly salary, medical facility, provident fund, insurance towards the retirement benefits, gratuity, bonus and periodical gifts for festivals. They are also provided with housing loans, educational loans for their children's education and as well as marriage loans for their children.
- 3.2. In the quarries / mines the workers are provided with dwelling houses near the quarry site enabling them smoother working and easy travel time. They are also provided with drinking water and other sanitation facilities.
- 3.3. In many companies they also provide the transport facilities like busses for their travels.

In support of the matured Indian Stone Industry complying with all the Indian laws and regulations to the international standards, we are enclosing herewith the statement of the All India Granite and Stone Association (AIGSA), Bangalore and Indian Monument Manufacturers Association (IMMA), Chennai dated 15th March 2010 and 18th February 2010 respectively. In addition we have enclosed a DVD titled "The Story of Indian Granite". We are also enclosing a letter received from Indo German Export Promotion Project (IGEP)

We respectfully submit that India is a democratic country with full freedom for everybody wherein one can go to any news media, TV media or approach the Court of Law for any problem. This is a transparent society with good working environment. In evidence for this good working environment we invite the attention of the US Department of Labour for the investment and manufacturing of the Ford, Caterpillar, Nokia, Hyundai, Toyota, Komatsu, Hitachi, Terex, Atlas Copco, Poclain, etc. We further state that there are no child labour or forced child labour which are all nothing but allegations of imagination. On the contrary many stone mining companies are funding and running schools and colleges for the benefit of workers' children and others.

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The Indian Natural Stone Industry have collaborated with IGEP Foundation sponsored by the Ministry of Commerce along with RUGMARK India, an organization looking after the improvement of social standards and child care and their education etc. have inspected many quarries and factories and found there are no child labour or forced labour in Indian Natural Stone Industry. They are looking after the interests of the German Importers for the last 2 years. This also clearly prove and establish beyond doubt that there are no child labour as alleged with some doubt.

We are happy that the US Government has used the Indian Stones in many monuments like Vietnam War Memorial, Holocaust Memorial Museum – Washington D.C., Astronaut Memorial and many more. Now we are absolutely shocked that a baseless allegation is being thrown against the Indian Stone Industry in general. India is one of the ancient stone civilization countries. We have several thousands of stone monuments and memorials, temples, mosques, churches showing the artistic talented work and the expertise of the workmen. Taj Mahal and many other monuments are UNESCO monuments. The Indian Stone Industry strictly follows the Central Governments' and State Governments' rules and regulations on Minimum Wages Act and Labour Laws including their welfare measures, healthcare, pension and insurance, bonus and retirement benefits. India is a democratic law enforcing country and the Indian Stone Industry is absolutely complying with the Indian Laws and UN charter directions. We believe that the US Department of Labour (USDOL) will not rush and make any wrong conclusions prematurely without fully studying the subject in details. You may kindly send this copy to the US Department of Labour without delay.

If the US Department of Labour would like to visit and inspect and investigate the statements and the facts stated herein, we very much welcome and will facilitate visiting all the members. If the US Department of Labour has any other doubt or any other enquiry or additional information, they can always contact us and we will be too glad to submit additional information. These details are submitted on behalf of CAPEXIL representing the Indian Natural Stone Industry and the undersigned is the elected Chairman of the Panel looking after the interest of the Natural Stone in CAPEXIL.

Thanking you

Yours sincerely

R. Veeramani

Copy to : 1) Ms. Suchismita Palai, Director
Ministry of Commerce & Industry
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2) Mr. Amarendra Khatua
Joint Secretary
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